

Clear-out at Yishun as Super Reds go local

TANYO-HINN
yohinn@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE — S-League side Super Reds are set for a total overhaul.

The Yishun-based Korean club, which joined Singapore's premier domestic football competition in 2007 as its seventh foreign side, are planning on becoming a

local club, with the goal of playing a greater role in developing the game here.

They have released 18 of their 20-strong squad of Korean players who featured in the Great Eastern-Yeo's S-League 2009, keeping only midfielder Seo Su Jong, 22, and 21-year-old forward Park Kang Jin.

Seo and Park scored eight and five goals, respectively, in the recently concluded season.

"We retained them because they are young and can contribute to Singapore football," Super Reds team manager Francis Lee told MediaCorp yesterday.

"They have been here for about three years, and maybe they could even represent the country one day."

Housed at the Yishun Stadium, the club are also considering changing their name to Yishun Reds.

Said Lee: "We have been here for three years, and as a club, we want to do more in terms of community outreach and play a bigger role in the development of Singapore football, and have more people living in the Yishun area support the team."

He added that club chairman Charlie Yoon, chief executive officer of the Super Reds' main sponsor QT Technologies, was

committed to the change.

The team finished bottom in their debut season, but rocketed to second last year, just two points behind champions SAFFC. They finished fifth this season.

The club are currently discussing their plans with the Football Association of Singapore, and aim to finalise their squad by the end of December, hoping to sign two more foreign players from the K-League.

As for the 18 players released, including top scorer Choi Dong Soo, Lee said: "Some have offers from Korea, while the rest are looking to join other S-League clubs."

The 2010 season kicks-off on Feb 1.

MUAYTHAI

Bloodbath at the Bay

Two world title fights and top-ranked exponents to headline Lion City Grand Prix

IAN DE COTTA
ian@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE — Virach Suwanarat and Narinder Singh are hoping that two key events they are launching will put Singapore on the international muaythai map.

First on their list are two world title bouts and a Lion City World Grand Prix, featuring top-ranked middleweight muaythai exponents, in front of the float-in platform at Marina Bay on Dec 12.

Also on the card is a Superfights League from April to December next year in Sydney, Shanghai, Tokyo and Amsterdam, ending with the Grand Final in Las Vegas.

It will feature the winner of Lion City World Grand Prix and about 30 champions of similar tournaments worldwide.

According to Thai-born Virach, who is the chief operating officer of Superfights, the league is a first for the sport and has the full backing of the Thailand-based World Muaythai Council (WMC).

While Thailand, he said, will remain the home of muaythai with the King's Cup the holy grail, they want to make Singapore the international base to organise and promote the sport.

Said Virach: "We want Singapore to serve as a hub for the international circuit, and we have the backing of the WMC to do so."

"It is because of our infrastructure here, they feel we can do things a lot faster to help the sport in terms of bringing in big-name international bouts."

"Next year, our league will also only feature Grand Prix champions, the best of the best, and if we pull it off, people



Virach and Navinder want to promote Singapore as a hub for the international muaythai circuit. AFP

will look at Superfights and muaythai in Singapore quite differently."

The 40-year-old said they plan to include Singapore in the international league in future, but the sport needs to grow at a level comparable to the more lucrative markets in other cities before that can happen.

"We are staging it outside of Singapore for the moment because the cities we have in mind can each sell between 15,000 and 20,000 tickets," said Virach. "In Las Vegas, 40,000 is easy."

For the Dec 12 event at Marina Bay, Superfights chief executive Narinder said they are aiming at a modest sell-out of about 3,000 tickets, ranging from \$60 for grandstand seats to \$180 for ringside.

The main draw is the title bout between world heavyweight champion Ramazan "The Punisher" Ramazanov of Russia and Canadian challenger Simon

Marcus, who will be competing for an estimated purse of US\$50,000 (\$69,340).

It will also see Australian Tiana Caverly defending her women's middleweight crown against Polish contender Joanna Jedrzejczyk.

"What we are first doing is to increase the popularity of muaythai in Singapore with world-class fights," said the 38-year-old Narinder.

"We are not expecting a huge crowd in the beginning, but hopefully these fights will catch on with Singaporeans."

"We plan to have the Lion City Grand Prix every year."

But Narinder said they are also using the Grand Prix to build the Superfights brand as an international promoter of muaythai and have tied up with international broadcasters to telecast the event in Australia, Thailand, Europe and the United States.

Bernice on course for quarter-final spot

SINGAPORE — Bernice Lim remained on course for a spot in the quarter-finals of the 45th QubicaAMF Bowling World Cup in Malaysia.

The 17-year-old Singaporean rolled 1,660 pinfalls for a 16-game total of 3,237 yesterday to go into today's final qualifying round in 18th spot in the 66-strong women's division. The tournament is being held at the Melaka International Bowling Centre.

Only the top 24 men and women bowlers from the 24-game qualifying round over three days advance into the next round. England's Zara Giles (3,492) leads the women's division.

In the men's section, Singapore's top male bowler Remy Ong faces a trickier situation after rolling 1,536 pinfalls yesterday for a total of 3,119. The 31-year-old is currently 49th in the 87-strong men's division, which is being led by South Korea's Choi Yong-Kyu (3,666).

There are eight games left in today's final qualifying round, with Estonia's Kert Truus, Macau's Choi Io Fai and Italy's Marco Reviglio all currently tied in the 24th and final qualifying spot on 3,295 pinfalls. **TANYO-HINN**

SPORTS ON TV & RADIO

TODAY

8am **NHL** Capitals v Rangers, Ch 117
11.30pm **Golf** Kiwi Challenge, Ch 304

TOMORROW

1.55am **Football** WC qualifier: Ukraine v Greece, Ch 27
3.45am **Football** Germany v Ivory Coast, Ch 118
3.45am **Football** Holland v Paraguay, Ch 119
3.45am **Football** WC qualifier: Bosnia v Portugal, Ch 22
3.45am **Football** WC qualifier: Slovenia v Russia, Ch 21
3.50am **Football** Italy v Sweden, Ch 120
3.55am **Football** WC qualifier: France v Ireland, Ch 27
7.45am **Football** Fluminense v Cerro Porteño, Ch 27
9am **NHL** Coyotes v Wild, Ch 117
6.35am-11.35pm **SportsZone Minutes**
Hourly updates on 938Live